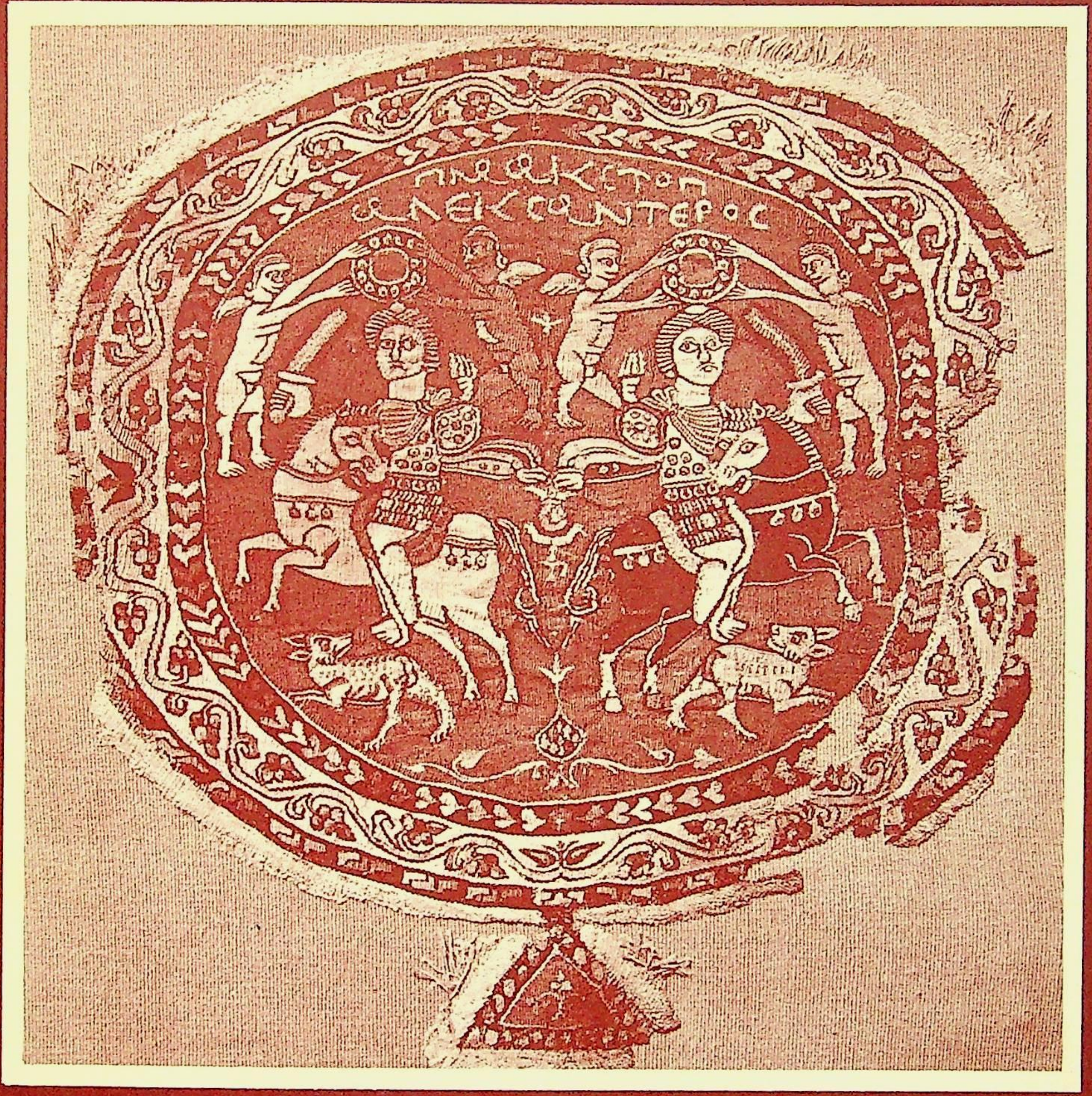
TEXTILE MUSEUM JOURNAL



Decorative Tapestry. Alexander the Great Hunting. Egypt, 8th to 9th century (?) T.M. 11.18

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CONSERVATION NOTES

A SPECIALIZED VACUUM DEVICE FOR FRAGILE TEXTILES

J. V. Columbus

The safe removal of loose dust, dirt or powdered fiber particles from the surface of an extremely fragile textile has always presented difficulties. Using a fine camel's hair brush, or an air syringe, may cause damage to the specimen and neither of these methods will dispose of undesirable residue. A vacuum with controlled suction (Fig. 1) can safely accomplish this job.

A common water type air pump, used for filtering in chemical laboratories, has been adapted for use where controlled removal of foreign matter is essential. The apparatus can be attached to any water outlet (a), by means of a filter pump coupling (b), connecting the filter pump (c), to a threaded faucet. A splash control similar to (d) may be added, if desired. Flexible rubber tubing (e), 5/16 inches in diameter, is connected to the side arm of the filter pump, the other end of the rubber tubing will hold a glass medicine dropper (f) to serve as an intake nozzle. All of this equipment is obtainable from Fisher Scientific Company.

The velocity of airflow is controlled by the amount of water passing through the filter pump. The intake nozzle of this vacuum is small enough to go between embroidery stitches and into otherwise inaccessible or damaged areas without endangering loose yarns, or around surface pigmented areas that may be powdering. Since the small opening of the medicine dropper (.002 millimeters) is comparable in size to the bore in the side arm of the filter pump, large grains of sand or flakes of material may enter and clog this passage and dust tends to collect in the tubing. A dirt collector can be built from a glass jar by sealing rubber tubing for inlet and outlet lines into an airtight top. Two traps of this sort might be used, one near the nozzle and one near the pump.

Fig. 1 Vacuum Assembly